

# 2020 ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge Action Plan

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Prepared by the Office of Student Life and Leadership – October 1, 2020

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## Overview

The UNC-Chapel Hill Office of Student Life and Leadership prepared this plan to summarize the goals and actions of our partners across campus to mobilize voters in advance of the 2020 general election.

“Promoting Democracy” is one of the eight strategic initiatives identified in *Carolina Next; Innovations for the Public Good*, which is the university’s strategic framework for the next decade. A key component of this strategic initiative is voter education, registration efforts, and reporting on student engagement during the 2020 election cycle.

UNC participates in monitoring of student voting through the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement to monitor and report on student election engagement. Building off a 20.7 percentage point increase in student voting during the 2018-midterm elections, leaders across campus hope to see student turnout increase significantly above 2016 levels.

As the COVID-19 pandemic brought significant changes to academics and campus operations for the fall semester, student organization, faculty, staff, and outside advocacy groups have pioneered innovative methods to engage student voters. This document explains voter engagement efforts to date and describes plans for additional voter engagement and education efforts in advance of the November 3 election.

## History

As a campus with a long history of student activism and advocacy, energy for participation in the democratic process is consistently high. Students also benefit from a variety of academic and co-curricular resources dedicated to public service and advocacy.

However, along with other North Carolinians, college students have historically faced a variety of barriers to voting. As a transient population, students can find it confusing to register, navigate voter ID and proof of residency requirements, and find their polling place. Until the 2020 primary election, the Orange County Board of Elections did not consolidate students living on campus into a single precinct. Students were required to travel significant distances from campus to vote on Election Day.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has added an additional set of barriers to democratic participation for the 2020 cycle as administrators took steps to reduce density on campus in late August. As of October 2, on-campus residence halls were only filled to 12.9% of capacity, as students relocated to their hometowns or elsewhere in the Chapel Hill Area.

## Goals

With the pandemic forcing changes in voter engagement methods, goals for this election cycle center around participation and voter education.

1. Increase student voting rate to at least 60% from 51.1% in 2016
2. Ensure all students have access to information on registering to vote and requesting an absentee ballot
3. Create an environment of election engagement that fosters a culture of civic engagement that extends beyond national election years

## Initiatives

The efforts listed below represent the most prominent efforts by campus units and students organizations to engage student voters. Many of these efforts are in partnership with non-partisan outside organizations, including You Can Vote, the Campus Election Engagement Project, and the League of Women Voters. This list is not necessarily exhaustive list of all voter engagement efforts on campus.

### Office of Student Life and Leadership (SLL)

The Office of Student Life and Leadership has focused on providing support to voter engagement efforts of student organizations and creating content for voter education through the following activities:

- **TurboVote** – Students can register to vote and receive important voting-related reminders through TurboVote on HeelLife, which is the university’s online platform for managing student involvement
- **Civic Engagement Working Group** –a group of student leaders in UNC’s civic and election engagement efforts that meets biweekly. SLL launched the group in the 2019 spring semester to create a coalition of student organizations that can coordinate their civic engagement efforts, share resources and best practices for voter engagement, and lay the groundwork for a culture of civic engagement that extends beyond elections. Working group meetings also include updates from staff and faculty on institutional voter engagement efforts.
- **Heel Talks Podcast** - Every Friday, SLL is releasing a civic engagement-related episode of the [“Heel Talks” podcast](#). Most of the pre-election episodes this fall have focused on voter education, with topics such as “Voting in Orange County,” “Protecting Access to the Ballot,” and “Judicial and Council of State Elections.”
- **Content for social media and campus newsletters** – SLL is creating graphics for Instagram and twitter, and election-related email blurbs that can be shared on campus social media channels and on listservs that reach thousands of students. The office is also working to aggregate information on events and election-related social media assets developed by others on campus.
- **Campus Election Engagement Project Fellow** – SLL created a new position for a “Civic Engagement Student Leadership Coordinator” during the 2019 spring semester. This student-staff member leads the Civic Engagement Working Group and many of SLL’s other civic engagement initiatives. This fall, a Campus Election Engagement Project Fellow holds the position, which gives them access to information on best practices from other campuses across the country.
- **DemocrACCy Challenge** – SLL leadership has worked with other ACC member institutions to launch the DemocrACCy challenge. The office also manages promoting the ALL-IN pledge and tracking voter engagement efforts.

### University Communications

University Communications manages the university’s relationship with the Orange County Board of Elections. For the 2020 cycle, UNC is hosting Election Day polling locations at the Stone Center, Friday Center, and Finley Golf Course Country Club. The Stone Center is a new polling location for 2020 that represents a consolidated precinct for all students living on campus. The 2020 primary election was the first election in more than a decade in which students were able to vote conveniently on campus on Election Day.

University Communications has also developed a Voter Engagement Communications Plan that includes long-form content on [unc.edu](http://unc.edu) and *The Well* and content for institutional social media channels. Content to date has included:

- Information for students about voting in the November general election (UNC.edu, [9/3/20](https://www.unc.edu/2020/09/03/voting))
- Instagram Q&A: <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17905935667516000/>
- How to vote in North Carolina (The Well, [8/21/20](https://www.thewell.com/2020/08/21/how-to-vote-in-north-carolina))
- Focus Carolina: Robert Joyce (The Well, [9/28/20](https://www.thewell.com/2020/09/28/focus-carolina-robert-joyce))

Encouraging student turnout is a priority for UNC social media managers during until Election Day, so these channels will share additional content and voting-related event information regularly.

### Carolina Athletics

Carolina Athletics announced a goal of 100% voter registration for student athletes in September. In support of that goal, and to inform students and the public, the Athletic Department has engaged in a variety of voter registration and education activities including:

- Voter registration drives at athletic training facilities
- Creating a “Heels Vote” campaign on social media to highlight voter registration and commitments to vote from community members
- Sharing voter registration information on GoHeels.com and across email newsletters to student, staff, alumni, and fans
- Working with Yahoo Sports to produce a voter education [video](#) including Basketball Coach Roy Williams and Football Coach Mack Brown

### UNC Libraries

UNC Libraries is hosting a series of voter education workshops, producing content for social media, and making librarians accessible to answer voter questions. These efforts include:

- Hosting a “virtual voter information booth” where students can enter a zoom room to have their voting questions answered
- Partnering with the League of Women Voters to host a Voter Information Session
- Focusing a session of their “Adulting 101” series on providing students with strategies for researching the candidates’ platforms, funding sources, and voting records
- Creating a “Voting FAQ” page to share on the libraries’ website and social media

### Promoting Democracy Faculty Group

Promoting Democracy is a group of four faculty members charged with encouraging students to vote as part of the university’s strategic plan. They have created a website at <http://uncvotes.com/> to provide a centralized home for information and language encouraging students to vote.

### Institute of Politics Civic Engagement Action Coalition (CEAC)

The Civic Engagement Action Coalition, which is an arm of the student-run Institute of Politics, has developed a variety of innovative ways to engage virtually with student voters. These efforts include:

- Creating a textbot (send ‘VOTEUNC’ to 56525) that provides students with information on registering to vote, finding their polling place, and requesting an absentee ballot

- Hosting “couch parties” where students reach out to those in their social circle about registering to vote and requesting absentee ballots. CEAC has developed a variety of materials for hosting couch parties that they share with other campus groups and students at different universities
- CEAC has worked with Duke Votes, which is a similar organization at Duke University, to host couch parties with competitions on who could contact the most student voters during a given time
- Reaching out to professors to organize class visits to talk about voter registration and voting plans. CEAC has also developed a “Voting 101” presentation that students visiting classes or professors can share
- Developing comprehensive information on voter registration and voting methods that professors can share with students on Sakai
- Creating a coalition of more than 50 organization and student leaders interested in disseminating voting-related information

## NCPIRG

NCPIRG has one of the largest bases of students interested in promoting voter engagement efforts. They have focused on holding phone banks and text banks, while using studentsvote.org to help students through registration. The platform also provides automatic reminders of important deadlines in the voting process. As the voter registration deadline approaches, NCPIRG is championing a “Commit to Voting” campaign

## Carolina Center for Public Service

The Carolina Center for Public Service is incorporating a variety of voter engagement efforts into their programming and led the charge to recruit 25 students and staff to attend the North Carolina College Voter Summit. Their efforts include:

- Recruiting 25+ students and staff to attend the NC College Vote Summit – resulting in a campus action plan winning top prize
- Organizing two “How do I vote in 2020?: Carolina Center for Public Service Office Hours with *You Can Vote*” sessions – Aug. 28, Sep. 4 + *hopefully two more in October before the election*
- Having *You Can Vote* visit CCPS-sponsored courses
- Adding links and reminders about voting and working polls to staff email signatures
- Hosting “Living Room Conversations” on the election in several existing programs (APPLES alternative break leader course, Community Service Scholars)
- Organizing a Living Room Conversation on political polarization with University Office for Diversity & Inclusion
- Organizing campus team of staff and faculty to participate in the NC Campus Compact Civic Engagement Initiative on civil discourse and dialogue formats in February 2020 (and February 2019) to build coalitions and skills
- APPLES Service-Learning Course Development Grant awarded to PLI 206 (Race and the Right to Vote)
- Working with Employee Forum Public Service Committee around messaging for opportunities related to staff working as poll workers

## Carolina Black Caucus

Carolina Black Caucus created social media and email assets targeted towards staff members that they are sharing on social media and invited You Can Vote to host a takeover of their social media.

## Office of Diversity and Inclusion

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion developed a Civic Engagement strategic plan for the Fall 2020 semester with initiatives related to highlighting civic engagement as a means of resiliency for marginalized communities namely Black and brown students. These efforts include:

- Organizing a series of Presidential Debate Watch Parties with the Carolina Center for Public Service and student government.
- Co-Hosting a Living Room Conversation on political polarization with the Center for Public Service

## Undergraduate Executive Branch of Student Government

The undergraduate executive branch is working with a variety of partners to distribute voter education information and encourage students to create a plan for voting. These efforts include:

- Hosting “Voter 101 Sessions” to spread awareness around voter resources and early voting
- Encouraging undergraduates to “Commit to Vote” and opt in to receive voting reminders from studentsvote.org
- Working with Carolina Housing to distribute voter information packets to students remaining on campus
- Developing a training video for student organizations working to register students on campus
- Creating a “Student Organization Voter Information Kit” that includes non-partisan social media graphics, scripts, and deadline reminders to amplify ongoing civic engagement work on campus

## Graduate and Professional Student Federation (GPSF)

GPSF has created target messaging for graduate and professional students and prioritized ensuring that students have access to election information along with non-partisan candidate information. These efforts include:

- Creating a social media and email messaging campaign with reminders for voter registration, absentee requests, and early voting weekly through the fall semester
- Creating an Outlook calendar with important election-related dates
- Providing non-partisan information on how candidate’s positions directly impact graduate students and their work
- Partnering with the Stone Center and WRAL-TV to host a set of town halls for US Senate candidates